

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT SUITES, BISMARCK ND

November 3, 2006
1:00pm

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call:

Present:

Daryl Beard	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Carl Bloomquist	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Wally Buckingham	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Lee Finstad	Arnold Maier	Dave Vandergon
Jerry Goll	Jerry Meske	

Absent:

John Hanson

Guests: ND Veterans Coordinating Council

Mark Landis, Secretary/Treasurer, CVSO Association

Joe Novak

Speakers:

Colonel David Thiele, ND National Guard

2007 – 2009 Legislative Initiatives [HANDOUT]

- ▶ Recruiting and Retention – adding additional funding; soldiers are in danger of losing custody of their children due to their deployment, the Guard is working on this issue
- ▶ Bonus Program
- ▶ Protesting at military funerals

Adjutant General David A. Sprynczynatyk, ND National Guard

- ▶ The Guard has become a strategic part of the armed forces by serving in combat roles.
- ▶ Deployed 3100 troops since 9-11; anticipating that number to increase. Troops are deployed through the world, including the southwest border in the States.
- ▶ Retention rate is exceptional; better than the national average.
- ▶ Total number of troops will remain the same but the number of units will be decreased.

Rob McDivitt, Medical Center Director, Fargo VA

Peggy Wheelden, VA Public Affairs Officer [HANDOUT]

- ▶ Working on more outreach and outpatient services.

- ▶ Update on Community Based Outpatient Clinics opening in ND
- ▶ Big project in the upcoming year will be building a new dike behind the VA facility. The VA has been working with the Corps of Engineers on the replacement which is expected to cost around \$3 million dollars.
- ▶ Veterans Day Program at 2:00pm on November 11, 2006 at the VA.

Tim Nolz, State Veterans Program Administrator, Job Service North Dakota
Larry Anderson, Director-Unemployment Insurance & Workforce Programs

- ▶ Federal funding has been decreasing especially in the DVOP and LVER positions.
- ▶ North Dakota Talent Initiative – State needs to attract, retain and expand labor.
- ▶ Enhanced computer system in place to better track veterans accessing services.

Bob Evans, ND Veterans Coordinating Council Secretary
Lobbyist registration forms need to be completed.

Mary Kae Kelsch, Attorney General's Office

- ▶ Tax exemptions for disabled veterans (Section 57-02-08)

Marcy Dickerson, State Tax Department, explained the impact of the changes proposed in the draft bill

Motion by Orletta Kilen to accept changing lines 6 and 25, from "valuation" to "the true and full value" in the draft bill, second by Carl Bloomquist Motion Passed.

[MOTION 1]

- ▶ Prohibit picketing at funerals of fallen veterans.

Motion by Wally Buckingham to support the bill drafted by Legislative Council for Representative Grande, second by Arnold Maier. Motion passed unanimously.

- ▶ Veterans' Bonuses

Motion by Arnold Maier to support going to the Adjutant General to discuss the Active Duty Component receiving a bonus and to put in place an appeals process, second by Dave Vandergon. Amendment by Gary Skarphol to remove references to the Commissioner and the Department in the proposed bill, second by Dean Overby. Amendment withdrawn. Motion passed, 11 yeas, 3 nays – Beard, Bloomquist, Skarphol. [MOTION 2]

Motion by Gary Skarphol that Lyle Schuchard and Jerry Meske serve on a committee to meet with the Adjutant General to discuss concerns regarding the bonus, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed.

- ▶ Reduced unemployment benefits for retired military individuals – proposed change exempting military retirement would result in North Dakota being in non-compliance

with the federal law thereby jeopardizing federal funding. Issue will be researched for clarification.

► Motor vehicles exempt from registration fees (Section 39-04-18).

Accepted by committee at September 15, 2006 meeting.

► Concurrent resolution regarding health care and pharmaceutical needs of veterans.

Accepted by committee at September 15, 2006 meeting.

► Corrections and additions to the All Veterans Memorial. Bill passed last legislative session directing the work be done but no funding provided. Mary Kae will still research this issue.

► Veterans License Plates (Section 39-04-01.10)

Accepted by committee at September 15, 2006 meeting.

► Tuition waiver for veterans at state institutions (Chapter 37-07.1)

Motion by Orletta Kilen to table bill, second by Jerry Meske. Motion passed unanimously.

► Veterans' preference (Section 37-19.1-01)

Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept proposed bill, second by Jerry Goll. Motion passed unanimously.

► Definition of wartime veteran (Section 37-01-40)

Motion by Carl Bloomquist to accept proposed bill, second by Dave Vandergon. Motion passed.

Motion by Daryl Beard to amend proposed bill to read, "2. A wartime veteran....during a period of war, or armed conflict, or who received.... during an emergency condition or campaign and who was discharged...." second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed, 9 yeas, 4 nays – Bloomquist, Buckingham, Finstad, Overby. [MOTION 3]

Workforce Development Council Update – Lyle Schuchard. A bylaws change was enacted to have the veterans representative serve on one of the three subcommittees - Executive Committee, ND Youth Committee and the Planning Committee. Lyle will now be serving on the Planning Committee. The next step will be to get the veterans rep position to be a voting member.

A letter of appreciation will be sent to Mary Kae Kelsch from the Administrative Committee for all her assistance.

Committee recessed for subcommittee meetings.

Committee recessed until 8:00am Saturday morning.

November 4, 2006
Committee reconvened.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call:

Present:

Daryl Beard	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Carl Bloomquist	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Wally Buckingham	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Lee Finstad	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon
Jerry Goll		

Absent:

John Hanson	Arnold Maier
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Motion by Gary Skarphol to approve minutes of August 2006 meeting with the correction that the “Hire a Vet Month” Proclamation designates November not October, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed.

Veterans Home Update – Mark Johnson, Administrator

► Fire Marshall Surveys – issues with air ventilation cited. The condition of the building needs to be addressed so a building assessment will be done. VA will pick up 60% of the funding for a new building.

Postwar Trust Fund Report – Chairman Jenson [REPORT PROVIDED]

Budget Committee – Lyle Schuchard, Chairman

Review of 2007-2009 Budget. Good meeting with OMB on discussing our optional package.

Postwar Trust Fund Committee - Wally Buckingham, Chairman

No requests before the committee at this time.

Appeals Committee – Dean Overby, Chairman

Heard one appeal on November 3, 2006 at the Bismarck Branch Office. Upheld Commissioner’s decision to deny veterans’ loan request.

Legislative Committee – Rudy Jenson

Recap of September 15, 2006 meeting. Working with ND Veterans Coordinating Council on proposed bills.

Dept of Veterans Affairs Subcommittee – Gary Skarphol, Chairman

Action Items:

► Proposed Loan Policy 210

Motion by Lee Finstad for policy to read, A. Correctional and/or Correctional Treatment Facility. "1. Applicants must provide proof of one year North Dakota residency prior to entering a correctional and/or correctional treatment facility. 2. Time spent in the facility does not count toward residency. 3. Applicants who are held in a correctional and/or correctional treatment facility are not eligible for a loan", second by Dean Overby. Motion passed.

► Proposed Grant Policy 410

Motion by Dean Overby to have same policy, A. Correctional and/or Correctional Treatment Facility. "1. Applicants must provide proof of one year North Dakota residency prior to entering a correctional and/or correctional treatment facility. 2. Time spent in the facility does not count toward residency. 3. Applicants who are held in a correctional and/or correctional treatment facility are not eligible for a grant", second by Lee Finstad. Motion passed.

► Proposed increases to grant amounts – Policy 430

Motion by Daryl Beard to accept the following increases: Dental -\$750 to \$1000, Optical - \$250 to \$300, Hearing Aids - \$1000 to \$1500 and the maximum amount per year - \$1000 to \$1500. Increases to be effective January 1, 2007, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed.

► Van Proposal

Van mileage will increase to 150,000 miles. Funds may be needed to help with major repairs; this would be determined on a case by case basis.

Motion by Daryl Beard to obligate \$5,000 to Transportation Program for van repairs and give the Commissioner authority to make the decision to use the funds, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed.

Discussion on lettering on the vans indicating Postwar Trust Funds were used, such as "Funded in part by the Postwar Trust Fund." Wally Buckingham will work with the Commissioner on determining if this is possible.

► Refinancing Veterans Aid Loans

Motion by Carl Bloomquist to approve refinancing loans, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed by voice vote, yeas – 11, nays – 2. ND Century Code needs to be changed.

► Committee approved out of state travel (California) for Cathy Halgunseth and Andrea Swiontek for training on the loan software.

► Discussion on issues surrounding county veterans service officers and veterans designating a POA for representation before the VA.

Motion by Gary Skarphol to approve subcommittee report, second by Dave Vandergon. Motion passed.

StandDown Report – Jerry Meske and Bill Lord
Financial report given along with breakdown of veterans attending. Overview of event given. Thanked Committee for their support.

Governor's Proclamation – "Hire a Veteran Month". Information needs to be disseminated to veterans organizations and the public. The original proclamation will be displayed in the Commissioner's office.

Commissioner's Report

- ▶ Purple Heart Plaque give to Commissioner for display in the Fargo office
- ▶ Veterans Day posters available for distribution
- ▶ Strategic Plan / Operational Plan – working with counties

Discussion on committee members taking a more active role in getting county commissioners to support their veterans service officer. Commissioner's office to provide information for press releases.

Next meeting:

Motion by Carl Bloomquist for next meeting to be January 26 & 27, 2006 in Bismarck or at the call of the Chair, second by Daryl Beard. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Lyle Schuchard
Secretary